

General Assembly

Amendment

January Session, 2007

LCO No. 9024

SB0143809024HD0

Offered by:

REP. FOX, 146th Dist.

REP. SPALLONE, 36th Dist.

REP. O'NEILL, 69th Dist.

REP. LAWLOR, 99th Dist.

REP. GODFREY, 110th Dist.

REP. ALDARONDO, 75th Dist.

REP. CLEMONS, 124th Dist.

SEN. MCDONALD, 27th Dist.

SEN. KISSEL, 7th Dist.

To: Subst. Senate Bill No. 1438 File No. 624 Cal. No. 701

"AN ACT CONCERNING NOTICE OF CERTAIN PROBATE COURT HEARINGS AND THE FILING OF CERTAIN REPORTS."

- 1 After the last section, add the following and renumber sections and
- 2 internal references accordingly:
- 3 "Sec. 501. Section 45a-8 of the general statutes is repealed and the
- 4 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2007*):
- 5 (a) The town or towns comprising each probate district shall
- 6 provide court facilities meeting the minimum standards required by
- 7 this section. If a probate district consists of more than one town, the
- 8 expense shall be allocated to the towns in proportion to their grand
- 9 lists last perfected. Such court facilities shall include: (1) Office space
- 10 appropriate for the conduct of judicial business, including (A) a room
- 11 for the judge of probate sufficient in size for ordinary matters in which

12 judicial proceedings may be conducted in private, (B) a separate room 13 for the court staff, and (C) on a prearranged basis, access to a larger 14 hearing room for the conduct of unusually large court hearings; (2) 15 furniture and furnishings appropriate to a court facility; (3) use and 16 maintenance of a copying machine and the necessary supplies; (4) use 17 and maintenance of [microfilming equipment and the necessary 18 supplies, including record books or the equipment to produce records 19 court record systems and equipment, including such record books and 20 electronic, digital, microfilming or similar systems required to 21 maintain, provide access to and produce court records, and the 22 necessary supplies for such systems, equipment and records; (5) the 23 necessary stationery, postage and other related supplies in order that 24 the court may properly carry out its duties; (6) typing equipment with 25 which to complete the necessary records; (7) basic telephone service, 26 which shall include all local calls; (8) if a court is computerized, a 27 dedicated telephone line and maintenance of the computer equipment; 28 and (9) adequate liability, fire, loss, theft and replacement insurance on 29 the furniture, furnishings, equipment, court facilities and the records of 30 the court.

(b) If a town or towns comprising a probate district and the responsible municipal official or officials within such probate district fail to provide the court facilities required by subsection (a) of this section, the Probate Court Administrator shall offer in writing to meet with the judge of probate of the district and the responsible official or officials to discuss such court facilities. After discussion and consideration of the circumstances of the court operations, the Probate Court Administrator may waive or modify the application of a particular requirement of subsection (a) of this section for court facilities.

(c) If suitable court facilities are not provided in accordance with subsection (a) or (b) of this section: (1) The <u>Probate Court Administrator shall provide written notice</u>, by first class mail, to the judge of probate of the district and the chief executive officer of the town in which the court is located, on or before October first of any

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year in which suitable court facilities are not so provided. Such notice shall specify the requirements of subsection (a) or (b) of this section that are not met and shall direct the submission of a plan as required by this subdivision. Not later than January first of the year following the year in which such notice is provided, such chief executive officer, or his or her representative, shall file with the Probate Court Administrator a plan and time frame for meeting such requirements and providing suitable court facilities; (2) not later than February first of the year following the year in which notice is provided under subdivision (1) of this section, the Probate Court Administrator shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the judiciary concerning the failure of the probate district to provide the required court facilities, [together with] which report may include a recommendation that the probate district be abolished as a separate district and be consolidated with a contiguous district where suitable court facilities can be provided; or [(2)] (3) if, in the opinion of the Probate Court Administrator, abolition of the district is not in the public interest and judicial action is necessary to enforce the provision of suitable court facilities, the Probate Court Administrator shall bring an action in the Superior Court to enforce the requirements for the provision of suitable court facilities.

(d) Any town located in a probate district that desires to (1) consolidate such probate district with one or more districts, (2) be removed from such probate district to a separate district established for any such town, or (3) be located in another probate district, may, by resolution of its legislative body, petition the General Assembly for such consolidation, separation and creation of a new probate district or relocation. The Probate Court Administrator shall provide such assistance in the preparation of the petition as the officials of the town or towns may request. At the time of submission of a petition to the General Assembly, a copy of the petition shall be sent to the judges of probate in the probate districts to be affected. No probate district may be consolidated with another district until the expiration of the term of

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80 office of any probate judge in an affected probate district.

(e) Each judge of probate shall provide suitable records and supplies, in accordance with subsection (a) of this section, for the court in the judge's district. The judge of probate shall cause a complete record to be made of all orders passed by such court and of all wills, inventories, distributions, accounts, bonds and returns made to or lodged with such court. The expense of records, microfilming or the equipment to produce records, and of supplies which the judge deems necessary, shall be paid, upon the order of the judge, by the town or towns composing the district in proportion to their grand lists last perfected.

- (f) When the Probate Court Administrator, by regulation, requires that the courts of probate use specified forms, education materials, supplies or equipment not otherwise required by this section, they shall be furnished by the Probate Court Administrator and the expense paid from the [fund] <u>Probate Court Administration Fund</u> established under section 45a-82.
- 97 Sec. 502. Section 45a-77 of the general statutes is repealed and the 98 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2007*):
 - (a) The Probate Court Administrator may attend to any matters [which] that the Probate Court Administrator [deems] considers necessary for the efficient operation of the courts of probate and for the expeditious dispatch and proper conduct of the business of [those] such courts. The Probate Court Administrator shall administer and enforce the provisions of this chapter, sections 503 to 505, inclusive, of this act and the regulations issued under this section, and shall ensure performance of the duties of judges of probate and clerks of the courts of probate in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, said sections and such regulations. The Probate Court Administrator may make recommendations to the General Assembly for legislation for the improvement of the administration of the courts of probate.
- 111 (b) (1) The Probate Court Administrator may issue <u>and shall enforce</u>

112 regulations, provided such regulations are approved in accordance 113 with [this] subsection (c) of this section. Such regulations shall be 114 binding on all courts of probate and shall concern [the auditing,] the 115 following matters for the administration of the probate court system: 116 (A) Auditing, accounting, statistical, billing, recording, filing and other 117 court procedures; (B) reassignment and transfer of cases; (C) training 118 of court personnel and continuing education programs for judges of 119 probate and court personnel; and (D) the enforcement of the 120 provisions of this chapter, sections 503 to 505, inclusive, of this act and 121 the regulations issued pursuant to this section, including, but not 122 limited to, recovery of expenses associated with any such enforcement, 123 as permitted by such regulations.

- (2) The Probate Court Administrator may adopt regulations, in accordance with chapter 54, provided such regulations are approved in accordance with [this] subsection (c) of this section. Such regulations shall be binding on all courts of probate and shall concern: [the] (A) The availability of judges; [,] (B) court facilities, [court] personnel and records; [,] (C) hours of court operation; and (D) telephone service.
- 130 [(3)] (c) (1) Either the Probate Court Administrator or the executive 131 committee of the Connecticut Probate Assembly may propose [such] regulations authorized under subsection (b) of this section. Any 132 133 regulation proposed by the Probate Court Administrator shall be 134 submitted to the executive committee of the Connecticut Probate 135 Assembly for approval. Any regulation proposed by the executive 136 committee of the Connecticut Probate Assembly shall be submitted to 137 the Probate Court Administrator for approval. If either the Probate 138 Court Administrator or the executive committee of the Connecticut Probate Assembly fails to approve a proposed regulation, such 139 140 proposed regulation may be submitted to a panel of three Superior 141 Court judges appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The 142 panel of judges, after consideration of the positions of the Probate 143 Court Administrator and the executive committee of the Connecticut 144 Probate Assembly, shall either approve the proposed regulation or 145 reject the proposed regulation.

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(2) Any proposed new regulation and any change in an existing regulation issued under this section on or after the effective date of this section shall be submitted to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to the judiciary for approval or disapproval in its entirety, provided, if more than one proposed new regulation or change in an existing regulation is submitted at the same time, said committee shall approve or disapprove all such proposed new regulations and changes in existing regulations together in their entirety. Unless disapproved by said committee within ninety days of the date of such submittal, each such regulation shall become effective on the date specified in such regulation, but not in any event until ninety days after promulgation.

[(c)] (d) The Probate Court Administrator shall regularly review the auditing, accounting, statistical, billing, recording, filing, administrative and other procedures of the [several] courts of probate.

[(d)] (e) The Probate Court Administrator shall, personally, or by an authorized designee of the Probate Court Administrator who has been admitted to the practice of law in this state for at least five years, visit each court of probate at least once during each two-year period to examine the records and files of such court in the presence of the judge of the court or the judge's authorized designee. The Probate Court Administrator shall make [whatever] any additional inquiries [are deemed] that the Probate Court Administrator considers appropriate [,] to ascertain whether the business of the court, including the charging of costs and payments to the State Treasurer, has been conducted in accordance with law, rules of the courts of probate, regulations issued under this section and the canons of judicial ethics, and to obtain information concerning the business of the courts of probate which is necessary for the [administrator] Probate Court Administrator to perform properly the duties of the office.

Sec. 503. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2007*) (a) If the Probate Court Administrator determines that the business of a court of probate has not been conducted in accordance with law or the regulations issued

pursuant to section 45a-77 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, or that the business of a court of probate is not being conducted properly or with expeditious dispatch, or that suitable court facilities are not being provided for a court of probate in accordance with subsection (a) or (b) of section 45a-8 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, the Probate Court Administrator may meet with the judge of such court in an effort to correct any such deficiencies. If the Probate Court Administrator determines that action under this section is warranted, the Probate Court Administrator shall give written notice of his or her determinations made under this subsection, and the reasons therefor, to the judge of such court. The Probate Court Administrator shall include with such notice the Probate Court Administrator's proposed disposition of the matter, which may include one or more of the following actions: (1) Reassignment of any case pending before such court to a special assignment probate judge or to another judge of probate by means of a citation in the manner provided in section 45a-120 of the general statutes; (2) designation of a special assignment probate judge to assist the judge of such court in conducting the business of such court; or (3) recovery of expenses associated with any of such actions, as permitted by regulations issued pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 45a-77 of the general statutes, as amended by this act.

(b) (1) Not later than ten business days after receiving written notice as provided in subsection (a) of this section, a judge of probate who is the subject of an action of the Probate Court Administrator under this section may file with the Probate Court Administrator a request for a hearing before a review panel. The review panel shall consist of (A) a judge of probate selected by the Probate Court Administrator, (B) a judge of probate selected by the judge who is the subject of the action, and (C) a judge of probate jointly selected by the judges who have been selected under subparagraphs (A) and (B) of this subdivision, except that if such judges are unable to make a joint selection, the judge of probate required under this subparagraph shall be selected by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

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(2) Not later than fifteen business days after the filing of a request for a hearing under subdivision (1) of this subsection, the review panel shall hold a hearing on the Probate Court Administrator's determination and proposed disposition of the matter. The Probate Court Administrator and the judge who is the subject of the action shall have a right to be heard and present evidence at the hearing. The Probate Court Administrator shall have the burden of proving that such judge received written notice as required by subsection (a) of this section. After the hearing, a majority of the members of the review panel may affirm, dismiss or modify the Probate Court Administrator's determination and proposed disposition of the matter under subsection (a) of this section. Either the Probate Court Administrator or such judge may request that the matter be heard on the record under sections 51-72 and 51-73 of the general statutes.

- (c) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, if a timely request for a hearing is not filed under subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this section by the judge who is the subject of the action, the Probate Court Administrator's proposed disposition of the matter under subsection (a) of this section shall take effect immediately upon the expiration of the ten business day period set forth in subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this section.
- (2) If the Probate Court Administrator, in consultation with the Chief Court Administrator, determines that, with respect to a pending case, an emergency exists due to the fact that a probate matter has not been conducted with expeditious dispatch within the proper time frames prescribed by law, rules of the courts of probate or regulations issued pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 45a-77, as amended by this act, the Probate Court Administrator's proposed disposition of the matter under subsection (a) of this section shall take effect when the judge who is the subject of the action receives notice as provided in subsection (a) of this section. Such proposed disposition shall be subject to such judge's right to a hearing and the decision of the review panel under subsection (b) of this section, provided the validity of any order or decree made, proceeding held or other action

taken by a special assignment probate judge or another judge of probate pursuant to such proposed disposition when an emergency exists due to the fact that a matter has not been conducted with expeditious dispatch, as provided in this subdivision, shall not be affected by any subsequent decision of the review panel under subsection (b) of this section.

- (d) The Probate Court Administrator shall issue regulations pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 45a-77 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, concerning rules of procedure for the conduct of any hearing before a review panel under this section. Such rules of procedure shall address: (1) The notice of the Probate Court Administrator's determination and reasons therefor under subsection (a) of this section; (2) the content of a request for a hearing and any notice of hearing; (3) hearing procedures; (4) evidence; (5) subpoenas; (6) the production of documents; (7) continuances; (8) intervenors; (9) the hearing record; and (10) the right to cross-examine, present arguments and inspect and copy relevant materials.
- (e) Any judge of probate who is aggrieved by any decision under this section may appeal such decision to the superior court for the judicial district in which the probate district of such judge is located. An appeal under this subsection shall be taken within thirty days of such decision. Appeals from any such decision rendered in any case after a record is made under sections 51-72 and 51-73 of the general statutes shall be on the record and shall not be a trial de novo. In any such appeal, the court may grant such relief as the court determines to be appropriate.
- Sec. 504. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2007*) (a) There shall be special assignment probate judges appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, on nomination by the Probate Court Administrator, from among the judges of probate elected as provided in section 45a-18 of the general statutes. A nominee of the Probate Court Administrator shall have demonstrated the special skill, experience or expertise

necessary to serve as a special assignment probate judge. The Probate Court Administrator shall issue regulations pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 45a-77 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, to establish requirements concerning the responsibilities of special assignment probate judges and the number, geographic distribution and expertise of such judges. A special assignment probate judge shall serve at the pleasure of the Chief Justice.

(b) Subject to the approval of the Chief Court Administrator, the Probate Court Administrator shall fix the compensation of special assignment probate judges appointed pursuant to this section. Such compensation shall, on the order of the Probate Court Administrator, be paid from the Probate Court Administration Fund established under section 45a-82 of the general statutes. Such compensation, including compensation that a special assignment probate judge receives as a judge of probate of the district to which he or she was elected, shall not exceed the compensation provided under subsection (k) of section 45a-92 of the general statutes. A special assignment probate judge shall have such benefits as may inure to him or her as a judge of probate and shall receive no additional benefits, except compensation provided under this subsection.

Sec. 505. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2007*) (a) A court of probate shall be open to the public for the conduct of court business not less than twenty hours each week, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, on a regular schedule between the hours of eight o'clock a.m. and five o'clock p.m. The judge of probate of a probate district may close a court temporarily owing to inclement weather, an emergency or other good cause. Such judge shall immediately give notice of a temporary closing to the Probate Court Administrator, together with the reason for such closing and the date and time when the court will reopen.

- (b) The Probate Court Administrator may, for good cause shown, modify the requirements of this section.
- Sec. 506. Subsection (c) of section 45a-92 of the general statutes is

repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July* 313 1, 2007):

314 (c) Each judge of probate or personal representative, except a judge 315 of probate who is the Probate Court Administrator, shall at the time of 316 filing such returns pay to the State Treasurer to be credited to the fund 317 established by section 45a-82, a percentage of the annual net income 318 from such office based on the following table in which the percentage 319 appearing in the left column shall first be multiplied by the minimum 320 annual compensation of a high volume court as provided in subsection 321 (k) of this section, as in effect on the first day of July of the calendar 322 year for which an assessment is due pursuant to this section, the 323 product of which shall then be multiplied by the applicable percentage 324 appearing in the right column:

T1 First 20% of the compensation assessment rate

T2	of a high volume court	\$1 nominal
T3	Next 6.67%	5%
T4	Next 6.66%	10%
T5	Next 6.67%	15%
T6	Next 6.67%	25%
T7	Next 6.66%	35%
T8	Next 13.34%	50%
T9	Next 33.33%	75%
T10	Next 33.67%	80%
T11	Next 66.67%	85%
T12	Next 133.33%	95%

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- T14 Excess over 333.67%, up to the maximum amount computed at 97.5%
- T15 by the Probate Court Administrator

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- All over the maximum amount computed at 100% by the Probate
- T18 Court Administrator.
 - 325 As used [herein] in this subsection, "maximum amount" [shall mean]
 - 326 <u>means</u> the amount of annual net income from such office which, when

327 applying the percentage payments set forth above, shall result in the 328 judge of probate retaining as net compensation, after the payment of 329 the above amounts, no more than the product resulting from the 330 multiplication of seventy-two dollars by the annual weighted-331 workload of the court, as defined [by regulations to be adopted] in 332 <u>regulations issued</u> by the Probate Court Administrator pursuant to 333 subdivision [(3)] (1) of subsection (b) of section 45a-77, as amended by 334 this act, but not to exceed the compensation of a high volume court as 335 set forth in subsection (k) of this section, provided this limitation shall 336 not apply to those courts described in subsection (k) of this section. 337 Such payment shall be deemed to be a necessary expense of such 338 office, but shall not be deductible from the gross income for the 339 purpose of determining net income of such office under this section. Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection, the annual 340 341 minimum compensation of a judge of probate shall be no less than the 342 product resulting from the multiplication of fifteen dollars by the 343 annual weighted-workload of the court, as defined [by regulations to 344 be adopted in regulations issued by the Probate Court Administrator 345 pursuant to subdivision [(3)] (1) of subsection (b) of section 45a-77, as 346 amended by this act, or no less than the judge's average compensation for the three-year period from January 1, 1996, to December 31, 1998, 347 348 but, in no event shall that minimum compensation exceed that 349 provided pursuant to subsection (k) of this section.

Sec. 507. Subsection (f) of section 45a-92 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July* 1, 2007):

(f) If, based upon such estimate, the amount payable shall be less than one hundred dollars, the payment thereof shall be made in one payment on or before December thirty-first of the applicable year. Otherwise, the amount payable shall be made in four substantially equal installments payable on or before the last day of March, June, September and December of the applicable year, except that in the case of an estimate filed pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (e) of this section, the amount payable under such estimate shall be made in

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substantially equal installments on such installment payment dates 361 362 next following the timely filing of such estimate in such year. The 363 estimated payment may be amended and changed at any time during 364 the year in which it is payable by increasing or decreasing the amount. 365 The amount of such increase or decrease shall be paid for or adjusted 366 in the installment or payment due at the time the estimated assessment 367 is next payable after such amendment. The Probate Court 368 Administrator may [adopt] issue regulations pursuant to subdivision 369 (1) of subsection (b) of section 45a-77, as amended by this act, to carry 370 out the intent of this subsection.

Sec. 508. Subsection (i) of section 45a-92 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July* 1, 2007):

(i) (1) If any estimated quarterly payments required to be paid pursuant to subsection (f) of this section [is] are less than one-fourth of seventy per cent of the total assessment due for that year or less than one-fourth of ninety-five per cent of the assessment paid for the prior year, such person shall be obligated to pay to such fund a penalty of ten per cent of the amount of the deficiency, except that the Probate Court Administrator may waive such penalty for cause in accordance with regulations [adopted] issued pursuant to subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 45a-77, as amended by this act. Any such penalty shall become payable upon demand by the Probate Court Administrator, and be due within thirty days after such demand, in accordance with regulations [promulgated] issued by the Probate Court Administrator, and shall be subject to interest under subdivision (2) of this subsection in the event of default in such payment. (2) Any payments required under subsection (f) or (h) of this section which are not paid at the applicable times prescribed in said subsections, and any penalty payment required under subdivision (1) of this subsection which is not timely paid, shall incur simple interest at the rate applicable under section 12-376 for delinquent payment of succession and transfer taxes where no extension has been granted, to be payable to the State Treasurer and to be added to the fund established under

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section 45a-82. Any alleged delinquency of a judge of probate in making payments as required under this section shall be referred by

- 7 the State Transpurer to the Attempty Company for such action as the
- 397 the State Treasurer to the Attorney General for such action as the
- 398 Attorney General deems necessary.
- 399 Sec. 509. Subsection (g) of section 5-259 of the general statutes is
- 400 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July
- 401 1, 2007):
- 402 (g) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, 403 the Probate Court Administration Fund established in accordance with 404 section 45a-82, shall pay for each probate judge and Probate Court 405 employee not more than one hundred per cent of the portion of the 406 premium charged for his <u>or her</u> individual coverage and not more than 407 fifty per cent of any additional cost for his <u>or her</u> form of coverage. The 408 remainder of the premium for such coverage shall be paid by the 409 probate judge or Probate Court employee to the State Treasurer. 410 Payment shall be credited by the State Treasurer to the fund 411 established by section 45a-82. The total premiums payable shall be 412 remitted by the Probate Court Administrator directly to the insurance 413 company or companies or nonprofit organization or organizations providing the coverage. The Probate Court Administrator shall 414
- 415 [establish] <u>issue</u> regulations governing group hospitalization and
- 416 medical and surgical insurance [in accordance with] <u>pursuant to</u>
- 417 subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of section 45a-77, as amended by this
- 418 <u>act</u>."